

**BLUE RIBBON COMMISSION ON CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE**  
**Minutes of the June 20–22, 2007 Meeting**  
**Riverside, California**

The commission meeting began at the Mission Inn Hotel on the evening of June 20, 2007, with a dinner and discussion on dual jurisdiction. During the meeting experts talked about their experiences of collaboration between courts, probation and child welfare, and efforts on the local level.

On Thursday, June 21, the commission toured the California Institution for Women's mother-child reunification program. The commission had discussions with staff members and incarcerated mothers. The commission also discussed local collaboration for improving the outcomes for children and families, regarding which all 58 counties will be establishing foster-care commissions. The meeting ended with a dinner on a discussion of court responsibility and leadership in ensuring improved foster-care outcomes.

Justice Carlos R. Moreno, chair, called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m. on Friday, June 22, 2007, at the Mission Inn Hotel in Riverside, California.

**Commission Members Present:** Hon. Carlos R. Moreno (chair), Ms. Mary Ault, Hon. Richard C. Blake, Mr. Lawrence B. Bolton, Mr. Curtis L. Child, Ms. Miryam J. Choca, Mr. Michael Cunningham, Dr. Jill Duerr Berrick, Hon. Leonard P. Edwards (Ret.), Mr. Raul A. Escatel, Ms. Deborah Escobedo, Mr. Robert E. Friend, Hon. Richard D. Huffman, Hon. Susan D. Huguenor, Ms. Teri Kook, Ms. Miriam Aroni Krinsky, Mr. Will Lightbourne, Ms. Donna C. Myrow, Mr. David Neilsen, Ms. Diane Nunn, Mr. John O'Toole, Mr. Ken Patterson, Mr. Derek Peake, Mr. Anthony Pico, Ms. Patricia S. Ploehn, Ms. Pat Reynolds-Harris, Ms. Jennifer Rodriguez, Mr. Gary C. Seiser, Mr. Joseph L. Spaeth, Hon. Dean T. Stout, and Ms. Jacqueline Wong.

**Commission Members Not Present:** Mr. Michael D. Antonovich, Hon. Karen Bass, Mr. Joseph W. Cotchett, Hon. Kathryn Doi Todd, Hon. Terry B. Friedman, Ms. Amy Lemley, Hon. Bill Maze, Hon. Michael Nash, Ms. Linda Penner, Ms. Maria D. Robles, and Hon. Darrell S. Steinberg.

**Commission and Administrative Office of the Courts Staff:** Mr. Christopher Wu (lead), Ms. Kristi Bergen, Ms. Karen Cannata, Ms. Carolynn Castaneda, Ms. Bonnie Hough, Mr. Harry Jacobs, Ms. Megan Lafrenz, Mr. David Meyers, Mr. Lee D. Morhar, Ms. Deana Piazza, Ms. Chantal Sampogna, Mr. Robert Steiner, Ms. Sonya Tafoya, Ms. Jennifer Walter, Ms. Renee Wessels (consultant), Mr. Don Will, and Ms. Leah Wilson.

**Others Present:** Ms. Crystal Baik, Ms. Donna Burt, Mr. Darrell Clark, Ms. Teresa Contreras, Ms. Sue Diedrich, Hon. Becky L. Dugan, Ms. Joanne Edgar, Mr. Kevin Gaines, Ms. Caroline Huffman, Ms. Ronda Johnson, Ms. Mary Ellen Johnston, Mr. Olin Jones, Ms. Nancy Kahn, Mr. Parissh Knox, Ms. Francis Kroh, Mr. Luke Madrigal, Hon. Sharon McCully, Mr. Douglas McGray, Dr. Barbara Needell, Ms. Jessica Recinos, Ms.

Connie Reitman-Solas, Hon. Elisabeth Sichel, Mr. Neil Smith, Ms. Vicka Stout, Ms. Minnie Thomas, Ms. Nancy Updike, Ms. Van Vu, Ms. Rose Wentz, and Ms. Monique Wilson.

**Item 1            Welcome and Remarks From the Chair**  
*Justice Carlos R. Moreno, Chair*

Justice Carlos R. Moreno welcomed commissioners and participants to the sixth meeting of the Blue Ribbon Commission on Children in Foster Care. Minutes of the March meeting were approved.

He also welcomed new commissioners: Mr. Bob Friend, Director of California Permanency for Youth Project, Mr. John O'Toole, Executive Director of the National Center for Youth Law, and Ms. Jacqueline Wong, Consultant for the California Department of Education.

Justice Moreno reiterated the importance of the testimony heard from a panel of incarcerated mothers the day before at the Institution for Women about their experiences in foster care and having their children in foster care. He highlighted the purpose of the meeting, which was collaboration between private and public entities, probation, and nonprofit organizations. He noted that he had met with Riverside County officials concerning how they handle dual jurisdiction cases and shared a few aspects that were pointed out to him in that meeting. For example, when dealing with a dual jurisdiction model, the judges must be cross-trained, and the agencies have to work on collaboration within their own respective agencies. County officials also touched on the role of collaboration at the local level. Justice Moreno mentioned the group's charge to once again come up with recommendations with respect to these local commissions.

Justice Moreno talked about the meeting's agenda and its relationship to the courts' work concerning child welfare and Indian tribes. He pointed out that California has the largest number of Native American tribes and the largest number of Native Americans of any other state. California has jurisdiction over foster-care proceedings with tribal children, but these children are caught between federal law, tribal regulations, and state law.

He noted the importance of meeting in Riverside County because of the active participation and cooperation of all participants, especially the Riverside County Tribal Alliance, the meeting's presenters.

Justice Moreno reiterated that the commission's end goal is to make recommendations that are politically viable, financially responsible, and welcome on the local and state level.

He brought attention to the articles included in the binders that were provided to the commissioners, stating the importance of these for educating California agencies and community groups.

He ended by thanking the commission for being there and assured them that their contributions are absolutely essential to accomplishing the commission's goals.

**Item 2            Commission Activities**  
*Mr. Christopher Wu, Lead Staff*

Mr. Christopher Wu highlighted a few events that Justice Moreno has been involved with since the last commission meeting, beginning in April, where he gave a presentation to the Child Welfare Studies section of the County Counsel Association. In May he was invited to speak at the California Mental Health Advocates for Children & Youth, where Mr. David Neilsen was presented with an award.

He also pointed out a few publications included in the meeting binder, such as *One Child, One Hearing* (the finished version), and *Voices From Within: Experiences of California Court Employees in the Foster-Care System*.

Lastly, Mr. Wu mentioned that on August 29 a delegation from the Texas Supreme Court will be visiting to learn about the commission in order to start their own task force on foster care. He also stated that the CASA conference will occur on October 4, and Justice Moreno will be giving opening remarks.

**Item 3            Public Education**  
*Ms. Renee Wessels, Consultant*

Ms. Renee Wessels talked about the materials included in the binders for public education, including the PowerPoint presentation with an informational overview of the commission. She reiterated that these are important tools to use.

She also asked the group to let AOC staff know if their organization would be having a statewide meeting, because the staff will be building a schedule of keynote addresses and speeches and would like to be of assistance.

**Item 4            Tribal Alliance and Interagency Collaboration Presentation**

Mr. Christopher Wu introduced a panel on tribal relations and Mr. Luke Madrigal as the master of ceremonies. Mr. Madrigal introduced Hon. Elisabeth Sichel, Ms. Mary Ellen Johnston (regional manager), and Donna Burt (court supervisor). Mr. Madrigal opened with a blessing and a cultural song.

Ms. Burt began the discussion by focusing on the development of the Tribal Alliance, touching on the concern for resources, notice, and the main priority of minimizing the involvement of the courts and counties while increasing tribal involvement. She talked

briefly about the three subcommittees that were developed under the alliance: the training subcommittee, the placement subcommittee, and the grant subcommittee.

Ms. Jennifer Walter, Attorney with the Center for Families, Children & the Courts, was introduced to talk about the statewide collaboration project she has been working on. She introduced the presenters, Ms. Connie Reitman-Solas, Ms. Teresa Contreras, Mr. Kevin Gaines, and Mr. Olin Jones. Ms. Reitman-Solas began the presentation by pointing out that Commissioner David Neilsen helped make sure that tribal people were included in the Mental Health Services Act. She then gave the background of the Inter-Tribal Council and pointed out that even though there has been a major effort to see that people follow ICWA procedures, there continue to be many instances of noncompliance.

Ms. Contreras mentioned a project on disproportionality that is being done in collaboration with Casey Family Programs. She then gave some data points on the issue.

## **Item 5            Subcommittee Meetings**

The commission broke up into its respective subcommittees. The subcommittees discussed the priorities of their work and major topic areas, came up with recommendations, and planned next steps.

The meeting was adjourned at 3 p.m.